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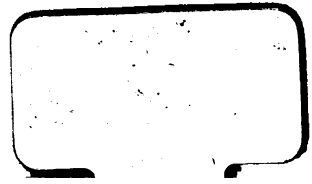
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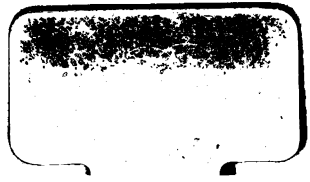
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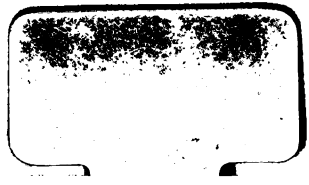
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HOW SHALL I PRAY?



HOW SHALL I PRAY?

SERMONS TO CHILDREN

ON

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

BY THE

REV. CLAUDE BOSANQUET, M.A.,

VICAR OF ST. NICHOLAS, ROCHESTER.



LONDON:

WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,

HOLLES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1869.

100. S. 422

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PREFACE.

VISITING among my people here, I have found that most of whom I have reason to believe that their faces are Zion-ward, began their pilgrimage in childhood. God has especially blessed the labours of my predecessors among the young in this place.

Perceiving this, I determined on establishing a service for the young, on the second Sunday in every month. Both attendance and attention have been very encouraging, and our numbers are still increasing; many of the working classes come to church on that afternoon, as the sermon, they say, is so plain, and easy to remember. These little sermons were preached in St. Nicholas'

during the winter of 1867, and the spring and summer of 1868.

We all teach our children to repeat the Lord's Prayer: and yet we must often have been painfully aware that they were using words of which they did not know the meaning. This induced me to preach the following course of sermons to my young people; and thinking that they might be helpful to parents, and Sunday-school Teachers, I have ventured to publish them.

May He who has given us the words to pray, giving us the spirit of true devotion, enable us to use them aright; and may He make this little book a means of blessing to some of the Lambs of His flock.

St. Nicholas' Vicarage,
March, 1869.

HOW SHALL I PRAY?

"Our Father which art in Heaven."

MATTHEW VI. 9.

We may make a good or a bad use of almost everything we have; and we have to be taught how to use aright even the commonest things. God gives us the corn, but it must be ground into flour; and even then we must learn how to make it into bread, or else it will be very little good to us. Children have to be taught how to use their knife and fork, or they would only hurt themselves. If I were to give you a book, or a musical instrument, they would be of no use to you unless you could read or play. So it is

with prayer: we could not pray to God rightly unless He taught us.

Now you see how very kind and gracious God is: first He tells us we may pray: we can all think of many texts which tell us to do this. Then we are taught the best place for prayer; Jesus says here, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly:"[1] and then, you see, God gives us the very words we should use: "After this manner therefore pray ye," Jesus says, "Our Father which art in heaven," &c.

Now if I am actually told what to say, is there anything more I want before I may feel sure God will hear me when I pray? Yes: I must understand, when I use these words, what the words mean; and I must want what I ask for.

[1] Matt. vi. 6.

If, when I say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," I really do not want God to forgive me, I shall not be forgiven. And if, when I pray, I do not think about what I am doing, my prayer will be no good; no, it will even do harm. Think of that, children: *a heartless prayer, a thoughtless prayer, is a sin.*

Now I suppose there is not one of us who has come into Church to-day, who does not say every day, and twice a day, the prayer beginning, "Our Father which art in heaven." And it is because I know how many children say their prayers without thinking, that I am going to talk to you about the Lord's Prayer. I am sure that Satan does not like to see you pray, and it is he who tries to make you think of other things, when you are upon your knees. And I know, too, that both children and grown up people often repeat the Lord's Prayer without thinking, even when they do pray other prayers earnestly; partly because they know

these words so well that they say them off like a lesson; partly because Satan hates this prayer, because it is the best; and partly because they really never think of all that this prayer means. So I hope you will try and attend, while I tell you something which is in this prayer.

Now the words we have to-day, you see, are not a prayer at all: they are an address to God. We speak to God, and we say something about Him; and I think we see three important things of which we are reminded in these words, "Our Father which art in heaven." Only think of that! Three things to remember and to feel in these six words! and you have often said the whole prayer, from beginning to end, without thinking. (1) God is a Father, (2) He is the Father of the whole world, (3) this great Father lives in heaven.

What a nice short prayer Jesus has given us! He was sitting upon the mountain, and teaching the people; and of course they could not have

remembered a long prayer, and so He gives them a short one. And besides, a long prayer would never have done for children, but this is so short that every little child can remember it; and I have no doubt some children were listening to the Lord Jesus at that moment. Perhaps their mothers brought them, because they could not very well come without them: they were afraid to leave them at home. But when they got there, the little things began to listen, for what the Saviour said was so simple, that it seemed as if He was speaking only to them.

I. First then, God is a Father; and the first thing you ought to think of when you pray, is, "Who am I praying to?"—Your Father. The first word the baby says, is "Father," "Mother;" not quite so long as that, but some shorter word, which means the same. St. Paul says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your

hearts, crying, "Abba, Father."[2] The word "Abba," or "Abh," means "Father:" an easy word for a child to say; and if you had lived in the Holy Land, you would have heard the little Hebrew children lisping, "Abh," "Abh," meaning "Father."

When you pray, then, to God, you go to your Father. Perhaps you think, "Oh, God has so many to love, He cannot love me!" Or, "How can God care for such a child as I am?" But if your mother has ten children, does not she love them all? And though some are out in service, and one is a tiny baby, do not your parents love the baby as well as the others? Then God loves *you*. Now what a help this is to pray; and, indeed, you never will pray properly unless you feel, "I am praying to my Father." Supposing you do wrong at school, the teacher punishes you, and would perhaps do

[2] Gal. iv. 6.

so even if you said you were sorry; and, perhaps, too, would not very soon forget how wrong you had been. But if you go and tell your father you are sorry when you have done wrong, he forgives you; even though he feels that he must punish you, perhaps, to make you remember: you know it is only because he loves you. And when after punishment, you say, "I am sorry: I am good now;" your father and mother forgive you at once. And the Prodigal Son, who ran away from home, and behaved so badly, felt, "The only chance is for me to go and tell my father." Then, dear young people, seeing that God is a Father, if you go and say you are sorry, and ask Him to forgive you, He will forgive you at once. David says, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed

our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."[3] Those are beautiful words; I should like you to learn them by heart.

Then, again, when you are in trouble,—when you have hurt yourself, you run to your parents; or when anyone is unkind to you, you come and tell your father. We all have troubles, children have them as well as grown up people; and since God is your Father, He is ready to hear everything you have to say: nothing is too small for you to tell Him. *Whatever you tell your parents, you may talk about to God.*

Then, again, supposing you wanted anything, —something you saw in a shop, or that something should be made for you; how often you have said, "Well, I shall wait till my father comes in, and then I shall ask him." God tells you that He is a Father, and therefore you may

[3] Psalm ciii. 10—13.

pray to Him. Yes: unless you might call God your Father, it would be no use your thinking about prayer; and you remember Jesus says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?"[4] God then tells you that when you kneel down to say your prayers, you ought to feel you are talking to a Father; and these words are put first in the Lord's Prayer, because no one can really pray to God for the things Jesus speaks of here, unless he first says, understanding it and feeling it, "Our Father which art in heaven."

II. But God is the Father of others as well as you. First, He is the Father of all mankind. Everybody in the world may call God "Father," and though Jesus says (in ver. 6), "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet," He does

[4] Matt. vii. 11.

not tell you to say, "My Father," but "Our Father." Now when you say your own prayers, you generally speak only about yourself: you say, "Give me this," "Forgive me my sins." But when you say the Lord's Prayer, it is "*Our* Father," "Give *us* this day our daily bread," "Forgive *us* our trespasses," "Lead *us* not into temptation." God hates selfishness. How often you hear a child say, "Don't take that: it's mine." "Give me this or that: it belongs to me." And it is because people are selfish, that there are so many quarrels. Even children of the same father and mother are very often unkind to each other.

"Our Father:" then we all belong to one great family, and you ought to think of and love others. Supposing your sister has come home for a holiday, how pleasant it is to have her at home again; and when she goes away, you feel quite dull. Supposing your little baby brother was to die: you go home from school,

there is no merry little one looking out for you, and expecting you to amuse him. There is the high chair set against the wall, the empty cradle, and the empty place at table, and the house seems so sad; you would miss him for many a day. Well, then, how you ought to think of the poor heathen, that do not know that God is their Father: they bow down to blocks of wood and stone, and some of them even worship devils. They are your brothers and sisters away from home; and this is one of the first things they are taught by our missionaries,—the beginning of the Lord's Prayer. Once upon a time, there were eight Christian families in an Indian village; they persuaded the others to make up their minds to become Christians also, and they sent a message to one of our missionaries. So he went to the place, and as he rode into the village all the people were ready to meet him; and he went through the crowd to the devil temple, and

sitting down, he began to teach them. The people listened attentively, and crowded so close upon him, that some of the little children crawled up and played with his shoe-strings. And after he had talked to them about God and the Lord Jesus, he taught them to say the words of the text; and at last the whole crowd began saying, "Our Father which art in heaven." What a difference! Before they used to worship devils, and now they have begun to speak to God their Father. Here were some children brought home, the family circle made larger.

And see, secondly, there is another way in which God is your Father. You became "children of God" when you were baptized, and all baptized persons are brothers and sisters. Think, now: some of you are better off than others; you meet in this church, and you do not know each other's names; but as you say, "Our Father," so you ought to think of all these as your brothers and sisters. You should try and

love each other for Jesus' sake. As I said before, how that word "our," which you are told to say when you pray by yourself, ought to make you feel the sin of selfishness.

III. But it is "Our Father which art in heaven." Now there is no doubt that just because we cannot see God, it is very hard always to think of Him. We read, "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not."[5] "Which is best," that Psalm seems to say, "to worship an idol which I can see, which is really nothing; or the God in heaven, though I cannot see Him?" Yes: God is in heaven, and there is no doubt that it is very difficult for you to

[5] Psalm cxv. 2—5.

think of Him, or to feel that He hears you when you pray; but still it is true what is said (Psalm xxxiv. 15), "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." You know that you ought to be respectful to your parents. The fifth Commandment is, "Honour thy father and thy mother;" and how much more, if God your Father is in heaven, ought you to honour and reverence Him. "Serve the Lord with fear," it says, "and rejoice with trembling."[6] And to pray with your lips when your heart does not feel, and when your thoughts are elsewhere, is a great sin. That word "in heaven," ought to make you very careful how you pray. "My Father is in heaven, and I am, in some sort, a child of God." Surely that ought to encourage us to think more about heaven, and long to be there. You are at school some forty weeks or

[6] Psalm ii. 11.

more in the year, and only a short time at home; but all the time you are at school you are always looking forward to the holidays. But in this world we can only live a few years, while in heaven we are to live for ever: where our Father lives, that is our home; then we ought to long to be there, and instead of being afraid of death, to look forward to it as a happy day, because it will bring us nearer home.

Once more, is God our Father in heaven? Then that teaches us where we ought to go to when we die, and how He wishes us to live with Him for ever. But then see what is written in Rom. viii.: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified toge-

ther."[7] Jesus was the Son of God, and as all His life here He seemed like one who had His home in heaven, so also He was holy as the Son of God. "Children of God" by baptism, you must be children of God in a better way still,—by having the Holy Spirit in your hearts. When you are sulky or out of temper, you cannot speak to your parents; and when you have told an untruth, you are ashamed to look them in the face. So if you listen to what the devil tells you,—if, as soon as you have said your prayers you think no more about God, you are not like a child of God, and you have no comfort in thinking of God as your Father. No: you must try to be like the Lord Jesus; then you are a true child of God, then you will feel that God loves you, that heaven is your home; and you will be able to say from your hearts, "Our Father which art in heaven."

[7] Rom. viii. 15—17.

"Hallowed be Thy Name."

MATTHEW VI. 9.

PERHAPS this part of the Lord's Prayer is the part which it is most difficult to understand, and most difficult to pray. I am afraid that most of you have said the whole of this prayer over a great many times, without thinking. It is a common fault among children to say their prayers carelessly, and instead of these prayers being any use, they are a sin against God; only that, of course, saying your prayers every morning and evening, you get into a habit which you will probably never give up. But perhaps you do sometimes try and think of what you are saying; and when you say, "Forgive us our trespasses," you think

of some wrong thing you have done lately, which you hope God will pardon. And when you say, "Lead us not into temptation," as you have been often told what temptation means, and have read how Satan tempted Eve in the garden, and Jesus Christ in the wilderness, then you think of how you were tempted, and how you did not turn away like the Lord Jesus, but listened, like Eve. And you do hope that God will not let the devil tempt you like that again, or if He does, that He will help you to stand; and you promise that you will not go near the sin, that you will not go where you are likely to be tempted.

But now, when you say, "Hallowed be Thy name," I believe that a great many of you do not know what that means, and therefore cannot pray these words properly. Now the Bible, as some of you know, was translated into English a long time ago; that is, the same English Bible we have, has been in use for the last two hundred

and fifty years; and so there are some words in it that are not used so commonly now as they were then. And in the Lord's Prayer we have two such words: the word "hallowed," and the word "trespasses." "Hallowed be Thy name," would have been, if the Bible were turned into English now, "May Thy name be treated as holy."

I. First, then, let me try and explain to you what is meant by hallowing a thing, and by hallowing God's name. You remember that in the fourth Commandment we have that same word "hallow:"[1] "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and *hallowed* it." And God said to the Jews, "Ye shall 'hallow my Sabbaths.'"[2] God set apart one day in seven to be different from all the rest.

[1] Ex. xx. 11. [2] Ezek. xx. 20.

The Jews kept the Saturday, and we keep Sunday. "Remember," says God, "the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."[3] On Sunday we ought to do no work that we can possibly help. We ought not to take our own pleasure, but we ought to feel that the day is holy; and when we open our eyes on Sunday morning, till we close them on Sunday night, we are never to forget this is God's day, and not ours. This is to "hallow" the Sabbath, to look upon it as holy. Supposing that God took your mother from you, and you went to the funeral, and saw her laid in the ground, I dare say you would not like, a week or two afterwards, to see a number of rude boys playing on the grave: you would feel as if they were almost insulting your mother; it would hurt your feelings. It is said that when staying in Scotland, not long ago, our gracious Queen went into a cottage

[3] Exod. xx. 8.

where a poor woman was preparing her food; the Queen asked to taste it, and the good woman gave her a basin and spoon, and the great Queen of England sat down and ate of the homely fare. When the Sovereign left the cottage, the old woman set the basin and spoon aside, declaring no one should use them from that day, because they had been used by the Queen herself. That was something like "hallowing."

So, when we come to God's house, the boys take off their caps, and we all go quietly to our places. We feel we are not in a room, we are in a Church; and we should not talk or laugh, but should remember whose house it is: it belongs to God; it is set apart for His worship, and we ought to regard it as holy. Well, then, when you say, "Hallowed be Thy name," you mean, "May all people feel, and may I feel it more and more, that the name of God is a holy name; and as I must not play on Sunday, and must not talk in Church, so I must not speak

of God lightly, or think of Him without a holy fear." But the Sunday is set apart to be holy, because "God rested on the seventh day from His work;" and Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week. And the Church is to be looked upon as holy, because here we worship God, and God meets us with a blessing; so the name of God is to be "hallowed," or treated as holy, because of what God is. You know names are now only given to distinguish things; but at first names were given because they suited the person or the thing. Thus David's great son was called Solomon, for Solomon means "Peaceable," because David knew it would be peace in his son's reign. Hannah called her child "Samuel," that is, "asked of God," that both she and he might always remember he was given by God; and that when Hannah "lent him to the Lord,"[4]

[4] 1 Sam. i. 28.

she only gave God what really belonged to Him. And especially we read, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."[5] For "Jesus" means "God our Saviour." And if we knew our own language better, we should find that every name was suited to the thing so called. So in Exod. xxxiv., God proclaims His name to Moses: thus we read (ver. 6), "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Therefore the name of God, means God Himself; and therefore the prayer, "Hallowed be Thy name," is to pray that we may all worship God, and that we may all know Him and honour Him.

II. Next, I want you to see what this prayer teaches us about ourselves. First of all,

[5] Matt. i. 21.

you remember the third Commandment; and I need hardly stop to point out to you that the taking God's name in vain, and vain swearing, is a sin which this prayer condemns; and yet I am afraid that some fathers and mothers, who teach their children regularly to say the Lord's Prayer, and therefore to pray "Hallowed be Thy name," make use of dreadful language before their children. Now I showed you last time, that in the words "Our Father which art in heaven," the word "our" instead of "my," showed us how wrong it is to be selfish, and that we must learn to think of others as well as of ourselves. So, how could any selfish child use *these* words? If you were to kneel down, and were told to pray in your own words for what you wanted, some of you would ask for this or that for your bodies; some few would say, perhaps, "Oh, God, forgive me, and give me the new heart!" But which of you would ever say, unless you had been taught it, "Hallowed

be Thy name"? You see, the person who prays this prayer properly, must have put away all selfishness: he must be thinking about God. No one who is not a true child of God, can ever really say such words. Now there are three things which are necessary for the person to pray these words with his heart; and remember your understanding what they mean is nothing, unless you really wish it when you pray.

First of all, then, you must know God. How could you say, "Hallowed be Thy name,"—that is, may all people worship Thee,—if you do not know what God is? Such a person, then, will be always going to God in prayer, and especially will love the Bible, which tells us all that God is. Children, think: do you try to know God? Do you think much about Him? Do you feel that you know God better than you did, perhaps a year or two back? How can you honour, reverence, and worship a God you do not know? No: this prayer clearly means,—I know something

of God: I hope I shall know more every day; then I shall honour Him in my heart. Some of you have read of the Athenians having an altar "to the unknown God," and perhaps if St. Paul were with us to-day, he would say, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."[6]

Secondly, you must love God. It is the heart that is to pray this prayer, and you see that after saying, "Our Father which art in heaven," we go on to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name;" and that evidently means, "O that all might know that they have a Father in heaven!" God is just and holy. He hates sin, and we must never forget this; and when we pray this prayer, we desire, among other things, that "men," as Darius says, "should tremble before the living God."[7] But if you put these two sentences together, any little boy or girl will see that it means, "O Lord God, Thou art a most gracious

[6] Acts xvii. 23. [7] Dan. vi. 16.

Father: Thou hast forgiven me my sins, received me as Thy child; O may I always love and honour Thee as my Father! Because I love Thee so much, therefore, before I ask anything for myself, I pray that I may hallow Thy name." Dear children, why do you suppose it is that many of you cannot say these words with your hearts? Because you do not love God. And why do not you love Him? You have never tried to know Him: you have never confessed your sins, and asked Him to forgive you, for Jesus' sake: you are like a little child who has done wrong, and not made it up with his father. But when you feel you are a sinner, and go and confess your sins to God,—when those words, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"[8] mean something to you, then

[8] John iii. 16.

you will feel, "God loves me;" and your love to Him will make you forget yourself, and think of Him. When you can really say, "Our Father," it will be quite natural to you to go on, "Hallowed be Thy name."

Thirdly, it is a promise that you will serve God; for of course you cannot say, "Hallowed be Thy name," if you do not try to hallow it yourself; and this brings me to speak—

III. Of what this prayer means about the world. It is the desire, "O that the whole world knew and honoured God!" And if there be any beings living in other places,—if, for instance, the stars are worlds inhabited, "O may they come to know their Maker!" Think, now: we live in a Christian country, but most people care nothing about God; they never pray to Him, they never come to His house, they never read His blessed Book. But when you say this prayer, you mean, "I wish they did know and think about God, for they would

be so much happier." Well, then, of course, you must try yourselves to serve God. I can fancy some child here saying, "O don't you know my mother? I wish you did, for I am sure you would love her." But your friend would think a great deal more of what you said, and be much more likely to believe you, if he or she saw how you never forgot her commands. And so people who do not know God, when you begin to talk about Him, will look at you, and if they see that you are holy, they will believe that God is holy; and if they see that you are happy, they will believe that to honour and serve God is happiness, and that God is a gracious Father. You see, people do not know what God is. People who are not religious, are sometimes called "blind;" and just as a blind person does not see what you see, and thinks of things very differently from what they are, so most men make mistakes about God. They forget that He is holy, and so think

that they are sure of heaven, and take no pains to be better; or they think that God is hard and severe, and so think it is no use trying to please Him. But when we come to know God, and especially have found out that He is more kind than any earthly father, and loves us beyond what we can understand, we are so happy, and we say, "O that careless wicked people would turn and look upon God! O that they might know Him as we do!" And then think of the millions of poor heathen bowing down to idols that cannot help them, or worshipping devils, or false gods, who are described as so wicked that to think of them can only do harm; and we know about the true God: we have the Bible, and we can scarcely read a verse of it but that it puts good thoughts into our hearts; and even to think about our God does us good, and to think of Him as a Father makes us happy.

If you were to go to some places in England,

as, for instance, to Ham Common, near Richmond, and in many parts of India, you would find large buildings entirely devoted to the care of orphans: children who have lost their father or mother, or both parents. There they are well fed, nicely clothed, and carefully taught, and on the whole, are very happy; but still, I suppose, if you saw them running about in the play-ground, you would think, "Poor little things! how I wish they had a kind father or mother, as I have." And so the poor heathen are like orphans, for they have the best of fathers, the great Father in heaven, but they do not know it. Oh, surely, if you have any religion at all,—if you are at all glad to hear and read about God our Father, you cannot help wishing that others might know the same, and it will come easy to you to pray that God's name may be hallowed. And now let me say just two words to you before I close. First, this is a great prayer, but it is what the Lord puts into

your lips, and is sure to be granted. Of course this is true about the whole of the Lord's Prayer; but especially we are encouraged about this petition, for when Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify Thy name," at once there came a voice from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."[9] And as we pray that God may be known and honoured all over the world, so God has said, "As I live, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God."[10]

Secondly, this is a hard prayer to pray, and you cannot really desire it till you begin to love God. When I love a person, then I am ready to do something for him; the more I love, the more I take pleasure in pleasing him rather than myself; love destroys selfishness. Now the love of God, that is, the love of the Lord Jesus, is the greatest love that is possible to man: you

[9] John xii. 28.

[10] Rom. xiv. 11.

cannot love anyone else as you *may* love Him. Here you see the true child of God thinking of God. Looking up to heaven, and seeing his Father there, he cries, "O that others knew Thee!" Therefore pray that you may be brought truly to know and to love Him; pray that every day you may be able to say, meaning it more, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and then from your hearts will come the prayer, "May I be a dutiful, affectionate child. May all men come to know this gracious God and Father." For that is what we mean when we say, "Hallowed be Thy name."



"Thy Kingdom Come."

MATTHEW VI. 10.

MY dear children, you and I are living in very remarkable times. You are not old enough, most of you, to understand this yet, but in a few years many of you will see why it is we fear that England will never be again so great a country as she has been. You know that God has set over us her most gracious majesty the Queen; and you have heard of those unhappy people called the Fenians, who are trying to shake off the rule of England in Ireland; and that disloyal spirit is only a proof of how many there are who think that it would be much better if there were no king or queen at all, but every one was allowed to do

very much what he pleased. And we should not be surprised if some of you lived to see the Government of this country altogether changed. But at least we hope that our children, having repeated so often in the Catechism that it is their duty "to honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her," will never forget that she is "the Lord's anointed," and as servants of God, will be faithful subjects. In the book of Judges, we find that when "there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes,"[1] the people became exceedingly wicked; and you will always find this to be the case. For instance, how is it among ourselves? In old fashioned days children treated their parents with the greatest respect, and did not speak unless they were allowed; but now you find young people quite setting their fathers and mothers at defiance:

[1] Judges xxi. 25.

they will go to what school they please, or they will stop away; they will be out at all hours; in short, they will do just what they like. And what else worse than this? Why, there is less reverence for God; and as King Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice"[2] (and we are not so surprised at his saying it, for he was a heathen), so there are a great many people every day who are in fact saying, "We do not care about God: we shall do just as we like." Now this prayer,—this petition in the Lord's Prayer, is a warning against such thoughts. While you must expect to meet with many people who just go their own way, and set God at defiance, it is your duty, while you daily use this prayer, to live as the subjects of the King of kings.

I. First, then, when we say, "Thy kingdom come," we confess that God is a King; as, when

[2] Ex. v. 2.

we say, "Our Father," we declare that He is a Parent. Yes: God is a King, and as a King He does govern. If you look through the Bible, you will see that every now and then God makes men feel that they cannot do just what they choose, but only what He permits. Look at Jonah. When God told him to go to Nineveh, he went down to Joppa, paid the money, and went on board a ship which was going west to Tarsus, exactly in the opposite direction. But God stopped him: the storm raged so fearfully that they had to throw the wicked man overboard, and after all he had to go to Nineveh. The great King Sennacherib came up against the little city of Jerusalem, with an immense army. You might say that there was no chance for the poor Jews, but God said, "I will defend this city for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake."[3] "I will put my hook in thy

[3] 2 Kings xix. 34.

nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest;" and the angel of the Lord in one night slew 185,000 soldiers. And that same King, when worshipping in the house of his idol, found that the false god could not protect him, for two of his own children killed him while he was worshipping.

Then again, look at Acts xii.: Herod kills St. James, throws St. Peter into prison: there would seem to be certain destruction coming on the Church. But Peter is released by the angel; Herod, by the same angel, is slain, and the Word of God increases. So that we may sing, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."[4]

Therefore God is a King, and yet His kingdom has not come as it will come. God rules, but He does not restrain all evil as yet. There are

[4] Ps. xcvii. 1.

many wicked people in the world, and God lets them do as they like; there are dreadful crimes committed, but it will all be right in the end.

Why, when we look upon the world, we feel there must be something better some day. God's people suffer, and the wicked are prosperous; but it is written, "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient: He sitteth between the cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet."[5] And the true Christian knows that "the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever;"[6] that at the day of judgment, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God:"[7] but "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."[8] And we read, "Then cometh the end, when He shall

[5] Ps. xcix. 1., P. V.

[6] Rev. xi. 15.

[7] Ps. ix. 17.

[8] Matt. xiii. 43.

have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."[9] Yes: God is a King. God does govern, and God will rule for ever. It really makes no difference about that, whatever you or I, or the whole world may do. You remember that in that Parable which tells us of the nobleman who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return," it goes on to say, "but his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." But by and by he returned, not a nobleman, but a king; and he said, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and

[9] 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

slay them before me."[10] God is a King, and the only question is, shall you find Him the King that "rules with a rod of iron;"[11] or, being His faithful servants, will He say to you at length, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?"[12]

II. Then it follows that we are subjects: that we ought to be governed. Now if you do what is wrong, and anyone speaks to you, how many of you say, "I may do as I like; I'm my own master or mistress: it is no business of yours." But that is not true. In the first place, you are not free: you cannot help being a servant. Do as you like, follow your own wishes, do what is wrong, you are serving the devil. Do you not remember what our Saviour says: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a

[10] Luke xix. 14—27. [11] Rev. ii. 27. [12] Matt. xxv. 34.

stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."[13] There is man ruled over by Satan; but he may be brought into the kingdom of God. Servants we must be, but we have a choice of masters: will we serve God, or will we serve the devil? And I will tell you how we find out that we are slaves, and that we have no more freedom than the poor negroes in some parts of the world. Jesus said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."[14] And so he is. Give way to passion, and you will not be able to keep your temper; take to any bad practice, and very soon you will not know how to break it off: you will resolve to give it up, and you will not be able. Satan has a kingdom, and you will find that you are his subjects.

Now, then, let us see what we say in fact,

[13] Luke xi. 21, 22. [14] John viii. 34.

when we ask, "Thy kingdom come." First of all, as I have said, we allow that God is a King, and that we are subjects; but, more than that, we confess that He ought to be *our* King, and we ought to be *His* subjects: that Satan is a usurper. You have read the history of France, some of you, and you recollect how they put to death the good, but foolish King Louis XVI. He had a son who ought to have reigned: he was the rightful king, France was his kingdom; but that wicked man Robespierre took the government: he then was a usurper. It was a dreadful time for France: so dreadful that it has been called "the reign of terror;" and you can well understand how many of the French people wished that the kingdom of the young prince might come. That is just what are our feelings when we first truly pray this prayer. We feel it is a dreadful thing to be ruled by Satan, an awful thing to get a habit of doing wrong; and when we say, "Thy kingdom come," we ask,

"Lord, turn Satan out of our hearts, and come and reign there Thyself."

If you look upon the map of Europe, you will find to the east of Sicily and Malta, a group of islands called the Ionian Isles; these were under the protection of England; but a few years ago they were given up to the King of Greece. A great many of the people living there are very sorry, though they were very glad at the time it was done; and now they wish that the kingdom of England would come again, and they might be British subjects once more. And so we, when we really say these words, confess, "It is better that God should rule in my heart, than that Satan should be my master, though he does indeed let me do what I like." Now there is a feeling in every soul that God ought to reign. Why is it that doing what we like, we are not happy? And how comes it that sinners are always finding "there is no peace to the wicked"? When you have told a

lie, when you have copied a lesson, when you have broken the Sabbath day, or taken what does not belong to you, why are you not quite comfortable? You like to do it, and it pleased Satan; but it displeases God. You have read the commandments of God, and you cannot help feeling that He ought to be obeyed, that He ought to rule; and when you use these words, you are just saying what conscience has told you you ought to say, these many years.

Secondly, there is in this prayer a confession it is better to be the servants of God. "Thy kingdom come." "Yes: but," you think to yourselves, "if I take God for my King, it will be very hard work serving Him; it will be very painful; I must always be good, and always be doing what I do not like; and though I know it will be better for me in the end, and when I come to die I shall be very glad that I have lived as a child of God, still I shall be unhappy all my life." No, dear young friends, you will

not. This is one of Satan's lies. St. Paul says, "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[15] Look at Gen. ii.: were not Adam and Eve happy then? You know they were, and you have often wondered how they could be so foolish as to listen to the serpent; they certainly would not have done so if they had believed what God told them. Think of the good people in the Bible, and some true Christians whom you have known yourselves: are they not really happier than you are now? It will be difficult at first,—hard to keep from sin, to give up your own way, and just to follow Christ; but as time goes on, and really very soon, if you are only determined about it, you will be much happier. First you will care less for what is wrong; then you will find a pleasure in the service of God; and then you will get to hate what you used to love. It

[15] Rom. xiv. 17.

is not peace as it is: is it? When you do what is wrong, conscience stings you; all the pleasures you enjoy do not satisfy you, and are very soon over; and then you are afraid to think about death and the day of judgment. Think this over calmly, and you will feel it must be better to have God for our King.

But, thirdly, you confess, when you say these words, that you are weak. You say, in fact, just what is the case: "I cannot do what I ought to do; I see it will be better to be religious, but I cannot help loving the world, and I am 'tied and bound with the chain of my sins.'" Well, then, this prayer is just the prayer for you. Do you suppose that other people have not felt the same; and that a great many who came at last to serve God heartily, were not just as weak as you, at first? There it is that they had to begin; and this prayer is the cry of the slave, that God would come and set him free. You will recollect that when Jesus, in answer to

the Apostles, taught them to pray, having given them the Lord's Prayer, He said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"[16] Well, now, this petition in the prayer seems to answer to that promise. You may say this of the whole prayer, but of this part of it especially; it is the prayer for the Holy Spirit. And this is where you must all begin. If you are determined not to try to serve God,—if you go out of this church this afternoon, feeling, "We will not serve God today," then you are still the willing slaves of Satan; you are "those enemies" who say, "We will not have this man to reign over us;"[17] and you are in danger of eternal fire. But if you can go as far as this, and declare, "We wish that we were the children of God, but oh, we

[16] Luke xi. 13. [17] Luke xix. 14.

want help, that we may give up this or that sin!" then here is just the prayer for you: Christ Himself has put it into your lips. Say humbly, really meaning it, "Thy kingdom come," and you shall be helped,—you shall have more desires after God put into your souls, and you that perhaps once served the devil, shall become the faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if this is a prayer for us to offer when first we turn to the Lord, it is a petition which we must put up through all our life; because, you know, it is not enough to have become the disciples of Jesus. St. Peter fell into sin after he had been a disciple three years. Satan will "desire to have *you*, that he may sift you as wheat." [18] Perhaps some of you are going forward to confirmation: recollect, then, that you will always have in this world a sinful heart; that you will want God's help every day that

[18] Luke xxii. 31.

you may be kept safe, and that you may live more and more like the servants of God. Of course, though I do not now dwell upon this, you will also then desire, when you offer this prayer, that others may become the servants of God, and you will pray that other poor sinners may be saved; and, especially as the kingdom of God means that which is to follow the day of judgment, you will be able to look forward to the time when Satan shall be cast out, and the kingdom of God shall be established for ever. But especially I want you to remember that however weak you are, here is the prayer that you want,—a prayer which if you only mean it when you say it, is sure to be heard; and that when you pray, "Thy kingdom come," you are in fact saying, "O my Father, give me Thy Holy Spirit, for Jesus Christ's sake."

"Thy will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven."

MATTHEW VI. 10.

Do you see how in the first part of the Lord's Prayer, you do not ask for anything for yourselves? What you ask for is that God may be honoured. The first part of the Lord's Prayer teaches you that you must not think so much about yourselves as about God.

Supposing there were two children in a family; one was always troublesome and disobedient, and the other always trying to please his parents, and one day they both come and ask their father to let them have a great treat. Which of the two would be likely to get it? Would not the father be very likely to say to the one, "You

have been disobedient and naughty, I cannot give you any pleasure: you must stay at home"? But he would say to the other, "Yes, my child, I am glad to let you go: you have made your mother and me so happy." Is not that just how it is with God's children? Some, who are children of God by baptism, never think of their duty to God: they just do what they like; perhaps many wicked things. Do they ever pray? Yes: sometimes. When they are in a storm at sea, and they are afraid the ship will be lost,—when they are very ill, and think that perhaps they will die,—oh, how they call upon God! But God does not hear them. He tells us, in the first chapter of Proverbs, that if men will not listen to Him when *He* calls, He will not hearken to them when *they* pray. Now I dare say there are some young people here who think to themselves, "Well, we have prayed to God, and He does not seem to hear us: He does not give us what we ask for." But then, what sort of children

are you? Look at this prayer: you are to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven:" all that, before ever you even venture to ask, "Give us this day our daily bread." If you want God to help you, you must serve God: and if you pray ever so earnestly, but do not try with all your heart to do what He wishes, your prayers are a mockery, and God will not listen to you. Look at our service: the first thing we do when we kneel down is to confess our sins. We say, "Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep." In the Litany we say, "O God the Father, of heaven; have mercy upon us miserable sinners." The first step in doing better is to acknowledge you have done wrong; and many of us never get our prayers answered, because we have never confessed our sins. And this is one thing which this part of the Lord's Prayer, which we are

looking at to-day, is meant to teach us. Jesus Christ is the Son of God: He never forgot God was His Father. In the prophecy of Isaiah He is called the "servant" of God.[1] He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work:"[2] and when it came to be the time for Him to suffer, He prayed, "Father, not My will, but Thine be done."[3] Well, and what do you find? Why that God always gave *Him* what He asked for, as He says Himself, "I know that Thou hearest Me always." Never forget that then: if you want that God should hear your prayers, you must tell Him when you have done wrong, and you must try to be His dear child.

Now this petition is very much like the last: it explains it, and carries it on, as it were. What do I mean when I say, "Thy kingdom come"? I mean, "May every one try to do what God

[1] Isa. xlii. 1. [2] John iv. 34. [3] Luke xxii. 42.

wishes." I told you, last time, God does reign, but there are many rebellious subjects. So, God's will is done; nobody can do anything against the will of God: but we read in the Psalms, "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye His hosts; ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure."[4] And there is just this difference between heaven and earth, that in heaven they are all trying to please God, while here many try to resist His will; and most people never think about it.

There are four things, then, I should like you to remember, as taught by the text.

I. First, when I say, "Thy will be done," it is to confess I have got a will of my own, and I have done too much as I liked. I am sure you all feel that! Why, think of your baby-

[4] Psa. ciii. 20, 21.

brother, or sister: how soon it shows its temper; one of the first things it learns to say is, "I wont." How it screams if it does not get its own way. Then, when it gets a little bigger, it begins to scratch, and fight for what it wants: and then, some years after, as you walk down the lane, perhaps, you hear the mother telling her son to go on some errand for her, and instead of his wishing to help his mother, he bawls out, "I sha'nt," and goes off to join the other boys at play. And when the girl gets to be about fourteen, or fifteen, and her mother says to her, "You shall not go there," or, "you must not be out so late," she is wicked enough to reply, "I shall do as I please." Now, is it very wonderful that when that boy and that girl say their prayers they are not heard? No: the wonder is that God does not punish them at once. Yes, we have all got a will! What are we going to do? Do you intend to do what you like? If so, then there is no knowing what you will come

to. Because you are a sinner, you are like the devil: to do what you wish, is to be "taken captive by the devil at his will;"[5] and you, that are sitting so quietly in church this afternoon, may become a Sabbath-breaker, a liar, a thief; may some day have to stand at the bar, to be tried for murder. Now I always think that the Lord's Prayer, though it is the Prayer for the holiest of God's servants,—nobody will ever pray better, nobody will ever go beyond it,—still it is just a prayer for a poor sinner returning to God; and when the soul says, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," it is in fact to say, "Not only have I done what I liked, but my own will has made me anything but happy." Think now: are you happy? Most of you have never tried to serve God: do not you feel that you are not so good as you used to be? that it is more easy to do what is wrong,—that it is

[5] 2 Tim. ii. 26.

harder to keep your temper? Whether you feel it or not, that is the fact: and the little boy of six years old had better turn to God at once, for he will find it much harder to be good if he waits a year or two longer. And you who have waited, perhaps, till you are fifteen, or sixteen, or whatever age you are, make haste and say, "Thy will be done!" It is easier to day than it will be to morrow; for your bad nature, your wicked inclinations, your temper, your passions, are getting every day stronger and stronger; while your heart is growing harder. Yes: the devil told you to do what you liked, and you would be happy; and he told you you could turn over a new leaf, and do better whenever you pleased. But you find he has told you lies: you are not happy; and you feel that you cannot serve God without His help; if you could, you need not pray about it here.

II. Secondly, when you say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," you declare

that God has a will about you. And that is the fact. Oh, is not that very wonderful? People pass you in the street without seeing you, or they meet you somewhere, and never think any more about you; but God is always thinking of you. Every mother here loves her own children best, thinks there never were such children as hers, would know her baby among a thousand. She is always thinking of them, working for them, providing for them, planning for them, dreaming of them,—they are never out of her thoughts: when she sees other people's children, she compares them with her own. Why is it God has a will about us? It is because He is our Father. Only feel that God is your Father, and you will quite understand that He has this will. "Our Father," "Thy will:" how naturally those words come after one another! Just as you might go to your mother and say, "Dear mother, I feel how you love me: what is it you want me to do?" I wonder how old the young-

est little child is here: God has a will about that little one; and if you want to know what that is, one of His first commands is, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord."[6] To do what your parents tell you, is to please God; and when you say these words, you confess that it would be much better for you to do God's will: that you would really then be happy. And that is one reason why you put the word "heaven" in: you know heaven is a happy place; you hope you shall go there after death. What is it that makes heaven so peaceful? Why, think! Why is there so much unhappiness in this world? Look at the boys running out of school: they have not gone twenty yards before some great cowardly bully hurts one of the little ones, who runs home to its mother crying; and, then, here are two more who had a dispute in school, and they are going to fight it out. Do not you

[6] Eph. vi. 1.

see each wants his own way? They all do what they like, try to get what they want, and so they cannot agree, and somebody must suffer. Is not that how there come to be quarrels at home? But now, how is it in heaven? They all think alike: they are all agreed in doing one thing,—namely, in serving God. There is only one will in heaven,—the will of their great Father; so there are no quarrels, no jealousies, no tempers there, but it is blessed peace. Ah, my dear children, there's the difference between earth and heaven! And if all on earth were only trying to do the will of God, this world would be like heaven itself.

III. Thirdly: when I say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," I promise something. I say, "I will try and do that will;" for it would be mocking God, indeed, to say this prayer, and then go away and do just as I pleased: and yet I am afraid that that is what many of us do. Now, of course,

first of all you must try and know what God's will is. The third thing that your godfathers and godmothers promised for you was, that you should "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life." God's will, then, is what God commands. You promise, then, that you will read the Bible, and that you will try to understand it. There have been many holy servants of God,—some whose lives are written in the Bible, and many who have lived since; you must read their lives, that you may see what the will of God is: and the more you do this the more you will certainly feel that all who serve God are happy. Well, then, in order to do God's will you must remember it. We are all apt to forget, but children are especially: you should ask your parents or your teachers gently to remind you whenever you seem to be forgetting. And then there is the promise that you will really try always, and altogether,

from morning to night, to do what God wishes. Of course you must be often asking yourselves about anything you are going to do, "Would my Father in heaven like me to do this?" And when anything happens which perhaps you do not like, it may be some disappointment,—as a wet day: then you must take care you do not grumble or get cross; you must remind yourself that you have prayed, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven;" and though it is not what you like, it is what God pleases.

IV. Fourthly: as I said to you about the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," so I may say about these words,—they are a request for God's help. My dear young friends, we *know* a great deal more than we *do*. We say such good words, we make great promises, we think, each of us, "I will try: I will not give way next time, I will not forget;" and when the temptation comes, though we know it is wrong,

we fall into the sin. And so, how kind Jesus is: He has given you the very prayer you want; He knew that you would find, as Peter did, that even when "the spirit is willing the flesh is weak,"[7] and that you would want the help of God. So He tells you here to go and confess to your Father, "We should like to do Thy will! When we do wrong it makes us unhappy; but still we do it: we know that we should be much happier if we were serving Thee. Oh, give us Thy Holy Spirit, to help us to do Thy will in earth, as it is done in heaven!"

And now let me say just a word to the young people. Here is a prayer which shows you your duty. As sure as ever you say these words, you are bound to try and serve God, or else it is a sin to make such a prayer. Try, then, in all things to please your Father in

[7] Matt. xxvi. 41.

heaven. In the first place, obey your parents: it will not be always agreeable to you; you do not see why you should do this or that particular thing: still obey, for it is a good thing to keep your own will down, and God has ordered this. Among your brothers and sisters do not always look out for yourselves, but learn to give up: do not always take the best thing. How often Jesus tells us we should "deny ourselves;" and if all the children in a family were to do this, what a happy, peaceful home it would be; and if only one in a home was thus trying to please God, how happy that one would be. If for all to do the will of God would make this earth like heaven, when any one person does that will it will be like heaven in his soul.

And, lastly, one word to you who are parents. You teach your children to pray this prayer: then help them to do as they say. Many of you are ruining your children, because you let

them do as they like: so long as they do not get in your way, you care very little; you do not think that God will require you to account for their souls; you never restrain them, and so they grow up head-strong, wilful, passionate: they bring disgrace upon you, and they find it almost impossible to pray this prayer. Teach them self-control, make them feel that it is a sin to get into a passion; teach them to command themselves; and the moment the baby shows that he has a will of his own, make him feel that he must mind you: do not let him have his own way. Teach your children to give up one to another; make them feel that they must expect disappointments, and bear them cheerfully. So they learn to deny themselves: so, being under control, they keep down their wills: and so you make it more easy for them to say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

"Give us this Day our Daily Bread."

MATTHEW VI. 11.

No doubt you find it hard to understand some parts of the Lord's Prayer. The three first petitions,—"Hallowed be Thy name," "Thy kingdom come," "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,"—seem to be beyond the understanding of little children; and though I have tried to explain them to you, to tell you something of what they mean, I dare say most of you have forgotten what I said. But we have done with the hard part now, all the rest of the prayer is simple and easy. I am to speak to you to-day, then, upon the words, "Give us this day our daily bread." Certainly the youngest child here understands what that means. Oh, to think that God, your Father,

should have given you such a simple prayer as this to say, and yet that you have said it many times without thinking! How shall I divide this subject, so that you shall remember what I say? I think perhaps it will be best to see, first, what this prayer teaches me about myself; and secondly, and especially, what it tells me about God.

I. First, then, I learn that I depend upon God for all I have. Everything I have comes from God: and as for the soul, so for the body; that is true which we read in the Epistle for to-day: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."[1] When St. Paul was preaching at Athens, he reminded them that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being;" and that "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."[2] I say, this prayer

[1] James i. 17. [2] Acts xvii. 25, 28.

teaches us this, because most people have got bread enough for to-day; and if it was not God who gave us all we had, to the rich man his riches, and to the poor man just enough to live upon, this prayer would not suit everybody: and it is just because people forget that everything they have, clothes and food and health, is not really their own, only given to them, lent to them by their Father in heaven, that they do not say these words with their hearts. I hope you say your grace before dinner: some of you, I dare say, say this grace, "For what we are going to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful." You "receive" it because God gives it, and you pray that you may be "truly thankful," because it is by God's mercy that you have it.

Secondly: the next thing which this petition teaches us about ourselves is the uncertainty of life. "Give us this day our daily bread." Yet you find people thinking about to-morrow, or next year, or the time of old age. You hear

children talk of what they shall do when they grow up; and perhaps, before another year has gone by, the daisies will be growing on the little grave in the cemetery. Sometimes you see a man laying up a great deal of money, building for himself a beautiful house, and just when it is all finished, painted and glazed, and the scaffolding taken away, and everybody is saying, "How nice it looks!" and thinking what a fortunate man he is, he dies; and some sunny morning, as you pass down the street, you see the hearse standing at the door, and then the coffin is brought out. The body is going to its narrow house: where is the soul? Yes: God tells you and me to ask for bread only for to-day, because "we know not what a day may bring forth."[3] As St. James says, "Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy

[3] Prov. xxvii. 1.

and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."[4] Ask God then to give you what is needful for to-day: live every day as if you should never see another. The life here is uncertain: you may live only a few days, at the most you can only live a few years; but there is a life beyond the grave that is to last for ever and ever,—the life in heaven, or the life in hell: and that is what you ought to think about, that is what you ought to pray about.

Thirdly, this prayer reminds us that we ought to be contented with what God gives us. The children of Israel had the manna in the wilderness: every day it came down from heaven; in summer and winter, whether it was a rainy day, or a fine day, it made no difference,—there was

[4] James iv. 13, 14.

the manna from heaven, and it lasted as long as they wanted it. But they wanted more: they asked for flesh, and God was very angry with them for asking for it. Bread, you know is what we all want: it is called "the staff of life," we cannot live without bread, but we can live if we have bread, and nothing else. Agur prays, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain:"[5] and this is much the same. If you were to come to me some day, and say, "Mother wants you to help her, for she has got no bread, we ate the last piece last night, and my brothers and sisters are so hungry;" you know that if I believed what you said was true, I should give you an order for bread, but not perhaps, for anything else, because you could

[5] Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

do without it. Now St. Paul says, "Godliness with contentment, is great gain:"[6] he says, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need;" and he says, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."[7] Some young people are so discontented: they have a great deal more than bread, they have plenty to eat, clothes to wear, kind friends, and many things, perhaps, which other children have not, but they are peevish, and fretful; the least thing upsets them. Perhaps it is a wet day, and they cannot go out; then they lose their temper at once, and are like the children of Israel, always murmuring. But we are taught, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content:"[8]

[6] 1 Tim. vi. 6. [7] Phil. iv. 11, 12.

[8] 1 Tim. vi. 8.

course. So God says He is a Father, He will take care of His children, and that His children should come to Him for their daily food, just as naturally as to an earthly father.

Well then, this petition in the Lord's Prayer brings out so beautifully how that God thinks of little things. With God there is nothing great or small: He thinks of every body, and every thing. He makes the stars, and there are thousands upon thousands of them; He causes the sun to shine down upon this earth; He "measures the waters in the hollow of His hand;"[11] the "stormy wind fulfils His word;"[12] and yet not a sparrow falls to the ground without His permission. He makes the tiniest flower to grow; and there is not a leaf or an insect but what, if you examined it through a microscope, you would see God's wonderful care. Just so it is here: and as

[11] Isa. xi. 12. [12] Ps. cxlviii. 8.

Jesus said to His apostles, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered,"[13] so He tells us here that He looks in to every home, He sees every hungry face: He knows, He cares, He loves; and He tells His children to say to their Father, "Give us this day our daily bread." Children, you will know some day, perhaps, more of the value of this prayer. Now these things do not trouble you: they are your parents' care; but the time will come, perhaps, when you are hard put to it: and then this part of the Lord's Prayer may be a comfort to you. I dare say there are some parents here to-day who have had a hard struggle this winter, who may be in difficulties now. You hear the nightingales singing so sweetly just now: "they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not

[13] Luke xii. 7.

much better than they?"[14] Jesus says. And so we read, "He giveth to the beast His food, and to the young ravens which cry."[15] God takes care of them: God will take care of you, and you may sing as sweetly as the birds. Jesus says, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."[16] A person might say: "Ah, it is all very well talking, but who is to help it?" But before Jesus gave this advice, He had given the prayer; and before He told them not to be anxious, He had assured them that they had a Father in heaven who would take care of them. And since the Lord thinks of little things, you are taught here to go and pray about them.

[14] Matt. vi. 26. [15] Ps. cxlvii. 9.

[16] Matt. vi. 31, 32.

Some of you, through God's mercy, have enough to live on: you will never know want. How thankful you ought to be, and sorry for those who have less than you have. But there are many things which you will sometimes want: well, do learn from this prayer to ask God about them. Then, if you go and pray, you will know that if it is good for you, you will get it; and if not, it is better that you should go without.

But while this prayer shows you how God thinks of the body, takes care for it, and is ready that you should tell Him all your wants, you must observe that this is the only part of the Lord's Prayer that speaks of the body at all. Here are six petitions, and only one has to do with our bodies. Jesus tells us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."[17] St. Paul says, "Set your affection on things

[17] Matt. vii. 19.

above, not on things on the earth."[18] And when we look at this prayer, our Lord seems to say, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"[19] Dear young friends, you have come to Church twice to-day; you came to worship God, but most of you have been thinking about other things. Some of you, perhaps, have not been listening while I have been talking to you, at least not so listening as to remember it. And if, when you pray, you forget what you are doing; if on Sunday, which is God's day, you talk about and think about worldly things, why, of course, that shows where your hearts are. I think this prayer should remind you of your sins. You have each got an immortal soul: a soul that must live for ever, a soul so precious that Jesus shed His blood for it, a soul so dear to God that He sent His Son to

[18] Col. iii. 3. [19] Mark viii. 36.

die for you; and what do you think of from morning till night? Well, you think about your story-books, your games; and day after day goes by, and there is your soul not cared for: you are not asking God to forgive you, you are not trying to be better. Whatever your sins are, they come over again every day: you get into a passion without trying to control yourself; you think about your body, you can say, "Give us this day our daily bread," but you care nothing about all the rest of the prayer. But do you see that this petition comes in the middle of the prayer? Why are you taught to say, "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," before you ask, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Because it is only God's dear children that may say these words; because it is only those who are thinking of their souls, and are living for heaven, who are bidden to bring their little

daily wants to God: to whom He promises to be their Father, and for whom He will provide the daily bread.

Once more: does not this prayer show us how the good and gracious God likes to have us ask Him for things, and loves to give? Supposing a person were always begging of you: you give him something to-day, then something next week, and then at last you would very likely give him rather more than usual, and tell him he was never to come again. If you go and ask your mother for something when she is busy, she gives it you perhaps to get rid of you: "There," she says, "take it, and run away." But God is not like that. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."[20] Though God has so many to think of, He can think of you just as if there were no one else. At all times He is ready

[20] Ps. cxxi. 4.

to hear you pray; and this you see, because He does not tell you to ask for all you want for your whole life, nor does He promise to give it: but He tells you to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," because He likes you to come to Him often. God loves to hear you pray: we are commanded to "pray without ceasing;"[21] and that teaches us to look to God for everything: not to want more than the daily bread. The Prodigal Son wanted to be independent—to have all at once; he said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me:"[22] that was his first sin. Surely you like to be constantly having proofs of your parents' love; and you ought to like in this way to be depending upon God. Things are often dear to us on account of the person who gave them; a very little thing, in that way, may be very precious. Supposing your father

[21] 1 Thess. v. 17. [22] Luke xv. 12.

were to die, and that you had some present —a book or toy, the last thing he had given you: I think you would take great care of it, you would put it away, you would not like any one else to use it, for fear they should spoil it: you would love it for your father's sake. So, dear children, when we have prayed for anything, and God has given it to us, it is far more precious as a token of His love.

And now just one word more. God teaches you to say, "Give us this day our daily bread." The Lord Jesus, sitting upon the mountain, gave this prayer; and many of those He was speaking to were poor people. In those days there were no unions, there was no parish relief: persons might very easily starve, like some of the poor people in India last year. But Jesus said to them, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall

put on."[23] Your Father knows what you want; if you are His dear child, you may ask Him for the daily bread. In giving such a prayer He promises God's people shall not starve; and the Psalmist declares, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."[24] Dear friends, young and old, the Lord knows how anxious we are about earthly things,—how Satan always tries to make us uneasy; but Jesus here tells us to leave our trouble to Him: tells us to bring our wants to God. He tries to take off from our shoulders the burden of care. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," we are told, "and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."[25] Because our souls are of far more consequence; the body may

[23] Matt. vi. 25. [24] Ps. xxxvii. 25.

[25] Ps. lv. 22.

die, but the soul must live; and if we will think about that, and pray for forgiveness, He will take off the burden of sin: He will take care of us through this life, and bring us at length to that blessed place where, we are told, this prayer will no more be wanted, for "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." [26]

[26] Rev. vii. 16, 17.

"And forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors."

MATTHEW VI. 12.

DEAR young people, there is one fault common to most of you, and that is thoughtlessness. Boys are cruel: they will hurt and torment an animal, but they really do not think of the pain they give; and boys and girls often give a great deal of trouble, just because they will not think. As we grow older we become more thoughtful, less careless, and perhaps, are very sorry we were not more steady when young. I have spoken to you before about your thoughtlessness in prayer: how you repeat your prayers, or say your grace without thinking; how you come to church and do not think whose house it is. Well, this part of the

Lord's Prayer will not perhaps interest many of you, just because you are thoughtless. There are many things you have not got to think of yet; your parents think of them for you. But then it is not right to think of nothing but your play. There are some things it will not do to forget; you must never forget you are a sinner: God tells you to remember your sins.

Now the last petition was, "Give us this day our daily bread," and I dare say you felt that you could pray that, because I told you that those words encourage us to bring every little matter to God: and though you may never have wanted bread, yet there are many things from time to time, which you would like to have, and God tells you that as He is your Father He is ready to hear every thing you have to say.

But when you are told to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," I am afraid that a great many of you cannot pray this prayer, because you do not

feel your sins, and you do not care about forgiveness. And yet why do you suppose God has told you to ask for this? It is because He knows you really want it. He knows us better than we know ourselves; and we can never be really happy until God has forgiven us. God says, for instance, "There is no peace to the wicked;" David says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered;"[1] and to show you that this petition asks for something really better than the last, David compares the two, when he says, "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."[2] That is, "I would rather have forgiveness, than all the world could give."[3]

[1] Psalm xxxii. 1. [2] Psalm iv. 6, 7.

[3] If any little boy or girl is wondering what is meant by

I. First then, this prayer tells us that we are all sinners; we are all wicked, we have all done wrong. There are many texts in the Bible which say the same; as, "There is no man that sinneth not;"[4] "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."[5] Of course it would be more blessed never to have done what was wrong, than even to be forgiven; but we have not got to think about that. For, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us,"[6] St. John tells us; and the only choice is,—will we be as we are, all wicked children, like children who will not say they are sorry? or will we ask to be forgiven?

the word "trespasses," they will find it explained in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel by St. Luke. Jesus was then giving this prayer a second time to His disciples; and in the fourth verse we read, "and forgive us our *sins*; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Therefore you see, by "our trespasses" we mean "our sins."

viii. 46. [5] Rom. iii. 23. [6] 1 John i. 8.

The Lord Jesus would not have given such a prayer if it were not wanted: He would not have told us all to say, "Forgive me," if we had not all sinned. Think now, here are a great many young people; they are very unlike each other in many things, but in this one respect they are all alike,—that they are all sinners; and there is not one here, not one that is old enough to pray, that is not bidden to go and ask for pardon. And I say again I do not believe that many of you ever think about your sins. I am afraid that many of you go on doing wrong every day, and you are not at all unhappy about it. You are much more troubled about your lessons, than you are about being good. If you get cross, you are not sorry, if you even tell a story perhaps, you are not ashamed, not nearly so much so as you would be if you had broken something, and had to go and tell your parents or your teachers that it was you who did it; and do you ever think of what the consequence of

all this will be? Why, if you do not ask God to forgive you, then He will not forgive you; and if you were to die without being pardoned, you know what would become of you hereafter.

II. Then, as of course you are never to say what you do not mean, you are not to mock God when you pray to Him: as you are sinners, as you have all done wrong, you are required to feel it, and to go and say so. It is not that God does not love you even now; though you have never asked for pardon. Of course He does: and it is because He loves you that He notices you at all. You were made His dear child in baptism: you may call Him "Father." It is because He loves you, that He gave His dear Son to die; and He calls you to come back to Him. But He cannot forgive you if you will not say you are sorry. Supposing one of my children does something wrong, and I punish him; it is because I love him that I do punish. If he was not mine I might leave him alone.

But as long as he is sulky and will not promise to be good, I cannot give him forgiveness. And just in the same way God loves us all; but it depends upon ourselves whether we feel that love and have the blessing of it. Many of you, I am afraid most of you who are here, have never really felt sorry for your sins; you have never asked God to have mercy upon you, and therefore you do not feel that God loves you: it is no pleasure to you to think of God; it rather makes you afraid. Supposing that, because you had done something very wrong, your father and mother would not speak to you: you have to do your lessons, you have your meals, you may go and play; but you have no pleasure in anything. Your parents are not pleased with you, and you feel it. And that is just how it is with people who do not pray this prayer with their hearts. God would be their Father, but they will not confess their sins. God is not their God; He is not the kind and gracious

Friend, but the terrible and holy God, who will one day call them to judgment.

Yet, no doubt, most people are not very unhappy. Young people are, as I say, thoughtless; and so they are not troubled about their sins. They are not happy, because, just as an orphan cannot be so happy as one who has a kind parent, so there is a want in their souls which can only be satisfied when they can feel God is their Father. What is wanted, then, that you may offer this prayer so that God should hear it? What is wanted, that you may have this peace? Of course, in this, as in everything else, you must have the help of the Holy Spirit; but, first of all, you want that the Spirit of God should just correct this thoughtlessness: should make you think. You want to be made to feel that you have a soul that can never die; that God sees all you do, and notes everything in His book, and that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one

may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." [7] Then you will feel that you are a sinner, and you will be frightened. But that is not enough. What will make you sorry? Do you know, I believe, dear children, that you would be much more sorry than you are, if you knew how much pain you give those who love you. A little boy commits a fault, says his prayers, lies down in his bed, and is fast asleep in a moment; but he never thinks how anxious his father and mother are, how they talk about his faults, and wonder if they shall ever correct them. And then they bend over him, asleep in his little bed at night, and they go and ask God to help them to teach him better, for they know that no one can change that heart but God Himself. I say, I believe that if children knew how they grieved their parents

[7] 2 Cor. v. 10.

and teachers, they would be sorry, and they would be careful.

I heard of a little child the other day, not quite two years old: it went into a passion, and its mother punished it. Still it went on being naughty; and the mother whipped it again, and when it seemed as if nothing would make it alter, the poor mother burst into tears, and cried as if her heart would break. That touched the little child's heart, and while it was still quivering with sobs, it crept up to its parent's side, and stroked her face, asking to be forgiven, and saying as well as it could, "I am sorry." And for many days after that it was much better. And, dear children, as it says in the Epistle for to-day, "We love Him because He first loved us;"[8] if you and I could feel how sin grieves our heavenly Father, then we should not only be ashamed, but we should be truly sorry. Yes,

[8] 1 John iv. 19.

when you feel, "God loves me," then you will not find it difficult to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

III. And then, thirdly, this assures us that God will forgive. This prayer is like a promise. "Who is a God like unto Thee;" it says, "that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy."[9] And, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."[10] God tells us to ask because He means to bestow. And when God gives this, it is the first of many many blessings. When the prodigal son came home he only asked to be forgiven, but his

[9] Micah vii. 18. [10] Isaiah lv. 7.

father gave him much more than he asked for, —clothes, and food, and ornaments. When your parents have forgiven you, then they make you feel it. Perhaps the Father takes his little boy out for a walk; talks to him, and answers all his questions. So, when God has forgiven us, He speaks to us in His Word, He teaches us about Himself, He hears us when we pray. God gives us what no other can: He knows we cannot do without His help, and therefore when we have said we are sorry, have asked to be forgiven, and have made promises for the future, He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us to keep them, and then there is a sweet peace in our hearts. Now we need no more be afraid to think of God. If He is to be "the great and terrible God;"[11] as "a consuming fire,"[12] to others, to us He is a gracious Father: all we have comes from Him; we take it as showing

[11] Neh. i. 5. [12] Heb. xii. 29.

how He loves us, and then we look forward to everlasting happiness in heaven.

You know how this forgiveness was bought for us, and how it is that God can call sinners like us, His children. God is holy; just, as well as merciful, as you see when He proclaims His name to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." [13] But He made a way for His love to flow to us: He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [14] And by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, He shows us how He hates sin, and yet how He loves the sinner. And if, before He died, Jesus gave the people this prayer;

[13] Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. [14] John iii. 16.

we who have read how He shed His blood for us, are much more encouraged to go and pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

But, there is something more wanted besides our saying we are sorry. When we say, "Forgive us our trespasses," we are told to go on, "as we forgive them that trespass against us." And in fact, no one can really pray the one, without promising the other. When king David was told by Nathan how wicked he had been in killing Uriah, he said, "I have sinned:" and he was forgiven. And see how forgiving David was. When Shimei cursed him, and threw stones at him and his people, David took it meekly, and forgave the wicked man; for he was really humble: he felt he was such a sinner, and deserved so much from God, that how could he be angry with this man? How often you find young people disagreeing, quarrelling, fighting, perhaps: what does this mean? They

cannot forgive. Ah, then they do not feel how much they need to be forgiven! Depend upon it, all that crossness and unkindness, shows that you are proud. If you had any idea how wicked you are before God, you would so despise yourself that you could not be angry with another. More than that, when we have been forgiven, we forgive. What did Jesus say? "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."[15] And when we have felt our sins, when we see what we deserve, when we have been freely pardoned, and remember that this was obtained for us by Jesus dying on the cross,—then, it is not only that we wish to follow His example, but we feel as if we must forgive: He wishes it, it pleases Him, it is the spirit He loves to see. God loves poor sinners: as He loves you, so He loves the boy or girl that

[15] John xiii. 34.

teazes you, or in any way wrongs you. And when you love Him, you will love all whom He loves, and you will learn from Him the spirit of forgiveness. In fact, these words, "As we forgive them that trespass against us," are the promise. "We will not sin again: we will try and serve Thee, our God; and as Jesus has said, 'Follow Me,' so we will try and be loving and gentle as He was; forgive as we have been forgiven, being 'kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us.'" You remember how the Epistle ended this morning: "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also." And then the Gospel, in the parable of the Rich Man, and Lazarus, tells us of some one who was very selfish, and was not at all kind to his poor brother.

When you feel your sins, and go and ask for pardon, it will not be difficult for you to make this promise. If you cannot forgive, if you can-

not love, if you cannot give up, one to another, and be gentle when people are unkind to you, —then you cannot be forgiven, because you do not really want it.

My dear young friends, here is a prayer which, if you have never really offered, I pray you make haste and put up: go, as poor sinners, and ask God to forgive you all your sins. And then, having been once forgiven, remember that every day you will want fresh pardon, because you are still sinful. Then, every evening, try and think of anything wrong you may have said or done; and go and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," for Jesus Christ's sake.

"And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil."

MATTHEW VI. 13.

IF you would pray earnestly,—if, when you say your prayers, you would wish to be able to want really what you ask for,—then you must think of how you stand half-way between heaven and hell. When you die the matter will be settled; and according as you live in this world will be your state for ever.

Now the Lord's Prayer puts us in mind of these things. It begins with the thought of heaven: it ends with a thought about Satan. We who are taught to say, "Our Father," "Hallowed be Thy name;" we who therefore may really know God as our Father, yet are

in great danger, and must not forget how St. Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."[1] It is very sad to think that many that talk about heaven will never be there; but though they have prayed, "Deliver us from evil," will let Satan tempt them, will be "taken captive by him at his will,"[2] and will go and dwell for ever with the devil.

Having prayed, in the last petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," we now go on to say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." For if we are really ashamed and sorry, and if we wish that God should forgive us, then we shall most earnestly ask Him to help us to do better for the time to come. It is as if, when a child says this prayer, he cried to God, "O my Father,

[1] Peter v. 8. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 26.

I have done many things wrong: I have been disobedient, I have forgotten my good resolutions; but forgive me, and I will forgive those who are unkind to me; be merciful to me, a sinner, and I will not be cross with my brothers and sisters. But then, Lord, I hope I shall not always be doing wrong like this; I want not to have every evening the same sins to confess, or to be as much in want of pardon as ever; therefore, from all evil and mischief; from sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil; from Thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation, good Lord deliver us; therefore, 'keep me from the evil, that it may not grieve me.'"[3]

Dear children, if we ought to be thoughtful when we pray, I am sure the Lord's Prayer ought to make us very thoughtful and grave. If we prayed these words from our hearts, then

[3] 1 Chron. iv. 10.

when we had got up from our knees we should be more serious, for the Lord's Prayer gives us so many things to think about. Let us try then and see what the Lord Jesus tells us, in that He has bidden us use these words. First, we are warned that there is danger. Once, when I was travelling in the train, an express train, going at the rate of sixty miles an hour, as we went along we heard a great explosion, a noise as loud as a cannon. They had put something down on the rails, so that when the train went over it, it went off; and this was to warn the engine-driver that there was danger. You may be sure people were very anxious. The driver shut off the steam, and stopped the train as quickly as he could, and only just in time to prevent our running into another train which was half off the line. On all lines of railway there are "danger-signals;" and when you see the arm of a signal up, that is to say "the line is not clear." Well then

this prayer is like a danger-signal. The Lord Jesus, who knows all about it, tells us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" and in that says to us, "Take care: there is danger." When you go to the Zoological Gardens you must not go too near the wolf's den, or put your fingers upon the bars of the monkey's cage, or you will be sure to get hurt; and parents have to take great care of their children there. Ah, children, your fathers and mothers know your tempers: they know how you will be tried; you think nothing about it, and that only makes them all the more afraid that Satan, the "roaring lion," will pounce upon you some day. Well then in this prayer Jesus warns you. Just as He said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat;"[4] and to all the disciples, "Watch

[4] Luke xxii. 31.

and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;"[5] so He tells you here that you will have to fight with the devil. Everyone will be tempted, for everyone is told to use this prayer. Before two countries begin to fight, there is what is called a "declaration of war:" that is, the two kings tell their subjects that they are going to war. Well, the war between Christ and the devil began thousands of years ago; and when the Lord God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,"[6] then He declared war.

Supposing that you had been with our troops in Abyssinia, the other day, and that standing on the top of one of the hills, you saw the Abyssinian soldiers drawn up in order of battle, not far off; I dare say you would have felt a

[5] Matt. xxvi. 41. [6] Gen. iii. 15.

little anxious, just as the soldiers did at Waterloo, when, as they were taking their breakfast, the bugle called them to fall in, and they heard that the French were coming. Very well. I said that this prayer is like a danger-signal; I say it is like the bugle-call: it tells us we have an enemy, and we must fight him, for he stands right across our path to heaven, and he will dispute every inch of the ground. I am afraid, young people, you forget this. As soon as you have done what is wrong, you think no more about it; unless, perhaps, your mother reminds you of it at night, when she talks to you quietly, just before you go to sleep. You do not think, Satan does: you forget, the devil never forgets. Peter did not watch when Jesus told him, and therefore he was sure to fall when the time came; and if you have not even thought of what you were saying when you repeated this prayer, the devil will find you off your guard, and you, too, will do the wrong thing he tempts you to do.

Supposing that some day your father got a letter, telling him that robbers were coming to his house that very night: what would he do? Jesus says, "If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."[7] He would tell the policeman, he would bolt and bar his shutters, he would have his revolver ready, he would not go to bed that night. So Jesus, giving us this prayer, says, "Take care, the devil is close at hand." Yes: he is near to every one of us. However young you are, you are not too young for Satan to think about you. He has tempted you again and again, and he will do so every day, as long as you live.

II. Secondly, this prayer tells us that we are very weak: that we have no chance against this cunning enemy in ourselves. He never

[7] Matt. xxiv. 43.

sleeps, he never stops from tempting us while we live; and if we don't take care, he will get the better of us to a certainty. Supposing, then, that when in Abyssinia the other day, Lord Napier had looked from the hill-top upon the enemy's soldiers, as I said. Well, he was a brave man, and he would not have been afraid. But if he had found out that half his soldiers were cowards, that a great many more were friends of the enemy, and that the moment the battle began they would go over to his side (as those of you who have read the English history will recollect some of Richard the third's troops did, at the battle of Bosworth Field), then he could hardly help being afraid, for he would know that he had no chance. That is how it is with us. We have need to be so careful, and to pray so earnestly, not merely because Satan is so strong, but because we have a sinful nature: we love sin. It is easy for us to do, or even like to do what he asks us. "Every man is tempted

when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed;"[8] therefore we are weak, therefore we have to pray. Look at the good men in the Bible. Perhaps we find no one better than Abraham. He was a man strong in faith, yet his faith failed him more than once; and he told a story, and said his wife was his sister. Moses, we are told, "was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."[9] When his brother and sister, who were older than he was, found fault with him, and said he was no better than they, he did not get angry: he held his tongue, and God Himself took his part. Yet even Moses lost his temper once, and smote the rock when he should have spoken to it. We are told these things, that we may feel, "If they fell into sin, how much weaker we must be, and therefore how much we want God's help." Your lives have been very short, but as

[8] Jam. i. 14. [9] Num. xii. 3.

you have lived long enough to sin, so you have many times done what was wrong. The child says, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" and then goes on to pray, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:" in which he says, "I have sinned before, but I do not wish to sin again: Satan has tempted me, and led me to do wrong; but now, Lord, I pray Thee, "lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.'" Beloved, if you do not think of the danger, of course you give the enemy an advantage. Sometimes when soldiers are marching, if they are not careful, they suddenly find themselves in an ambush: the enemy bursts out upon them from a hiding-place. But if you do not feel how weak you are, then you are sure to do wrong, because in that way God will teach you that you want His help. It is a long time before people feel this. When you have committed a fault, how ready you are to promise: "Oh," you say, "I will

never do it again!" You think it, and you really mean it; but it is easy to promise, and we would much rather hear you say, "I will try;" and, best of all, "I will pray, 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'" Oh, I would say to every young person here, try and call to mind what you have done that has been wrong; see what your particular sins are; and then, perhaps, you will say these words with your hearts.

III. Thirdly, you make a promise here. Indeed, all prayers to God must be joined with promises. You do not say (because it would not be right to say it), "I will never sin again," because you probably will; and we read, "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay." But you promise that you will walk carefully, that you will watch, that the devil may not surprise you. Ah, I am afraid you forget that! I told you once before, that children are so thoughtless; and because you do not think, and do not try (but the moment

after you have said your prayers you forget all about them), this prayer is not heard, and God does not help you. And as you promise that you will be watchful against sin, so you also say that you will not go near it: that you will avoid everything that makes you think of it. Sometimes, when children are told not to do a thing, though they will not exactly disobey, yet they go as near to it as they can. This will not do for God. Of sin, we are told, "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."[10] And again: "Abstain from all appearance of evil."[11] David says, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave unto me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person."[12] And that was a wise resolve. That is the only way to avoid sin: for if you play with edged tools, you will hurt yourself;

[10] Pro. iv. 15. [11] 1 Thes. v. 22. [12] Ps. ci. 3, 4.

if you meddle with the fire, you will get burnt; and if you trifle with sin, you will soon commit it. What is not right to be done, should not be talked about; if possible, should not be thought of. Take what trouble you will, you are sure to find plenty of evil thoughts coming up in your mind. Then you are bound to keep from bad companions, to keep away from bad places, to avoid bad books, and even many things that are not bad, if they are bad for *you*, and lead you into sin; for if you do not do all this, you mock God in this prayer, and the prayer itself is sin.

IV. Fourthly, the Lord, having given you such a prayer, in fact, says about this petition, as about the whole of the Lord's Prayer, "I will certainly grant it." "Lead us not into temptation," we say; but St. James says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man."[13] Because He

[13] Jam. i. 13.

cannot be tempted, therefore He cannot tempt; for first a person does wrong himself, before he tries to make any one else do so. How, then, it may be said, can God "lead us into temptation"? God is often said to do what He permits to be done; therefore if He lets us be tempted, He may be said to "lead us into temptation," just as He suffered the devil to try Job. Or He may withdraw His grace from us (not help us in the time of need), and then the temptation would be much stronger, and we should have no chance at all. Now St. Paul encourages us; for after having shown how the children of Israel fell into sin, so that of all those above twenty that crossed the Red Sea, only two went into Canaan, he says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." And here we pray,

that so far from letting us fall into grievous temptation, God will be pleased to deliver us out of all evil. Dear young friends, God has been very good to you a great many times. Just as your parents have taken care of you when you have been careless, so, though you have forgotten your prayer, forgotten the danger and the enemy, God does not: He has taken care of you, kept many temptations from you; but for His goodness, you would be much more wicked than you are. You pray that when the trial comes God will help you: and so He will. "Call upon Me," He says, "in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."[14] And St. Paul says, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."[15] Pray before the temptation, pray when the temptation comes, and God will help you: He will give you grace to stand. "Resist the devil, and he will

[14] Ps. l. 15. [15] Rom. xvi. 20.

flee from you," and you will then have more hope for the time to come.

And so ends the Lord's Prayer; for the last few words, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever," are what we call the Doxology: they are not part of the prayer itself. Dear children, the prayer begins by telling you that you have a Father in heaven; and, of course, where your Father is, there is your home, and there you should wish to be. The prayer ends by reminding you that you are not at all certain to be there; that there is an enemy who claims you as his servants, and who, as he will be cast into hell himself, will try to drag you down there with him. It is as if standing on some lofty hill, you saw your bright home in the distance: your Father there, the angels there, and many friends who have gone before. But there is danger close at hand: the devil and his angels trying to oppose you. There must be many temptations: how shall you ever over-

come? Jesus says, not only in this prayer, but in other places, that He is ready to help; and whether your life be long or short, if you only ask Him, the Lord will stand by you and defend you. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;"[16] and "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."[17] And so you shall pass safely through the trials of this world; you shall be delivered out of all the evil, and brought safe to that heavenly home, when you will sing, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

[16] Heb. xiii. 6. [17] Is. xliii. 2.

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